TECHNICAL NOTE  By J. W. B. BLACK

The closing ring and plate arrived at the laboratory coated with discontinuous layers of bituminous 'paint' overlying the pitted iron surfaces and obscuring the finer decorative features. A small fragment of textile was attached to the concave side of the plate.

The objects were photographed using oblique illumination and x-rayed thereby showing the presence of the triangular pattern on the closing ring and the punched dot decorations on the plate — also a repair beneath the textile fragment.

The paint layers were partially removed with 'Nitromors' water washable paint remover. The remaining paint and rust on the closing ring were removed mechanically with a needle and vibrotool and by electrolytic reduction in a bath of sodium carbonate solution. After repeated washing in changes of distilled water, the ring was immersed in a dewatering fluid (acetone), dried in an oven and lacquered with several coats of polyvinyl acetate in acetone.

The paint on the plate was less easily dissolved in 'Nitromors' and was subjected to bombardment with bauxite particles in a stream of compressed air (using an 'airbrasive' unit). De-rusting was accomplished electrochemically using zinc and caustic soda solution and the plate was washed, dried and lacquered as described for the ring.

Microscopic examination of the textile fabric has shown the warp (grey in colour) to be flax fibres and the weft (red or yellow) to be wool.

POTTERY WITH ROLLER-STAMPED LINKED CIRCLE DECORATION FROM LINCOLNSHIRE134 (FIG. 69)

In 1964 W. G. Simpson appended to the report on the Middle Saxon site at Maxey, Northants, a note about a remarkable sherd of pottery found at Stixwould, Lincs. (FIG. 69, No. 1). It was hand-made in a coarse hard fabric, and coated in a slip into which had been impressed a decoration of multiple interlinked circles by means of a roller stamp. Simpson likened the fabric to fabric G at Maxey, and concluded that "the extra-ordinary decoration — surely a unique example of stamped interlace on pottery — leaves no doubt that it is dark-age".135 This assessment has never looked entirely happy and may be questioned on a number of grounds:

1) Fabric. Although the general technique of manufacture includes some features similar to those found in the Maxey wares, in particular coil construction and slipping, the fabric itself is coarse rather than even-textured as G, very hard and dense, with some large and remarkably mixed gritting. Any superficial smoothness is the result solely of the thickness of the slip — indeed 'slip' may not be strictly appropriate for this generous surface coating. This distinction remains valid even though some of the hardness may be attributed to the secondary firing which the sherd has clearly suffered after breaking, and which has caused the surface to be brittle and liable to flake off. The techniques of coil construction and slipping are not, of course, confined to pottery as early as the Maxey assemblages.

2) Form. The sherd has a wall thickness of 14–15 mm., which combined with its assessed rim diameter of 16 in. (40 cm.) gives a vessel of a size and weight quite outside the Maxey range. The rim is crudely and unevenly finished, but for most of the surviving length is at an acute angle to the outer surface. This strongly argues that the

134 I have to thank successive keepers of the City and County Museum, Lincoln for access to the Stixwould sherds, and especially Andrew White for discussing these and related matters referred to below. John Cherry of the British Museum gave help over the Tattershall vessel and kindly read this note in draft. I am particularly grateful to Messrs A. E. Kirkby and A. R. Tailby of Waltham Toll Bar School, Grimsby, for allowing me to examine the sherd from their excavations at Humbersdon Abbey several years ago in advance of their publication of the site, and to Professor Cramp and Miss Betty Coatsworth of Durham University for patient advice on the stone sculpture. As usual, however, responsibility for opinions finally expressed here is mine.

FIG. 69
ROLLER-STAMPED POTTERY FROM LINCOLNSHIRE
1, 2. Pottery from Stixwould; 3. Pottery from Humberston. Sc. 1; 3. 4. Stone sculpture from Bibury, Gloucs.; 5. Stone sculpture from Broadwell, Gloucs. Not to scale
piece should be inverted to stand on its ‘rim’ and become part of a curfew. The sherd’s curvature agrees well with this vessel-type.\textsuperscript{136}

3) Decoration. Although Simpson did not pursue the matter so far, adequate parallels for the distinctive form of decoration can be found in stone sculpture of the Anglo-Saxon period. Rather than interlace proper, the pattern amounts to a variation on the motif of multiple free circles which had great popularity in the 10th and 11th centuries. Closest to this design would seem to be two pieces of cross-shaft from Gloucestershire, at Bibury and Broadwell (\textit{fig. 69, Nos. 4, 5}), with related decoration of linked single-strand circles\textsuperscript{137}. The Bibury piece has a system of large pellets, effectively four per circle, one each in the segments of overlap, and one each at the other compass points, which are echoed in the rosettes of the pottery design. Broadwell has the addition of a single linear strand bisecting the line of circles, and more numerous, though still symmetrical, in-fill of pellets. Multiple free circles are found in the N. Midlands in Kendrick’s Derbyshire group. They are not interlinked, but are normally double or triple circles, and at Darley Dale, Derbys., have pelleted in-fill and at Norbury, Derbys., Checkley, Staffs., and Stapleford, Notts., linking strands, typically diagonally.\textsuperscript{138}

No motifs of a comparable sort seem to have survived among the pre-Conquest sculpture of Lincolnshire, though of course free circles do appear as a variant among the repetitive late Saxon interlaces of the county. These sculptural analogies offer dating at earliest 10th-century in the case of the N. Midlands material, and probably somewhat later for the Gloucestershire examples, at the very end of the Anglo-Saxon tradition. They do not support a middle Saxon date.

4) Location. The find spot, as Simpson describes, is exceptionally low-lying, immediately adjacent to the embankment of the R. Witham, without which presumably the site would be frequently if not permanently under water. It is a wholly unlikely location for occupation in the Saxon period; villages in this area seek land over 25 ft. O.D. such as the islands of Bardney and Southrey. Furthermore, all other material so far recovered from the site has been of 13th to 15th-century date. It is surprising, when our understanding of local pottery now allows fairly ready recognition of middle Saxon and Saxo-Norman types in the E. Midlands,\textsuperscript{139} to find no material here supporting an early date.

Within a year of the publication of the above sherd, a second piece (\textit{fig. 69, No. 2}) was delivered to Lincoln Museum (Accession No. 32.64; donor Mr Hayes, Newstead Farm, Stixwould) apparently from the same site or immediately adjacent. The piece was accessioned with no further comment as a “fragment of stamped tile”. It may be described:

- Body sherd; fabric gauge 12-17 mm. Coil-made, in coarse dense sandy fabric containing large flint and calcareous grits; fired to light grey core and brick-red outside, with thick off-white to buff slip. Impressed in outer surface is discontinuous roller-stamped decoration in three sections, very similar to No. 1 in its arrangement of two-strand interlinked circles with two double linear strands interweaving central roundels, but different in detail through additional barbed border motif and lack of vestigial rosettes. Also two stamped chequerwork designs. Perhaps slight curvature on sherd at right angles to roller-stamping.


\textsuperscript{137} These parallels were originally suggested by Professor Cramp and details supplied by Miss Coatsworth.

\textsuperscript{138} T. D. Kendrick, \textit{Late Saxon and Viking Art} (London, 1949) pl. xlvi, 4; xlix, 1, 2, 1. For Kendrick’s comments on dating, suggesting a 10th-century date, see p. 77.

Without the roller-stamped decoration, this piece would probably be classified as post-Conquest of uncertain date. The large grid-stamp is not unlike those found on early Saxon pottery except in size, but finds post-Conquest parallels on tiles from a number of Lincolnshire sites, particularly monastic ones.\textsuperscript{140} The sherd is not large enough to decide unequivocally whether it is from a tile or a vessel; the coil construction strongly favours the latter, and if so it would clearly be of a large and heavy form.

Yet a third example (FIG. 60, No. 3) of the pattern of interlinked circles stamped on pottery comes from the Benedictine (Tironian) Abbey at Humberston near Grimsby. It was recovered from excavations of the reredorter drain during 1966–7, which formed part of a series of excavations lasting from 1964 to 1971.\textsuperscript{141} It may be described:

Large wheel-made ‘rim’ fragment, in dense grey sandy ware with occasional heavy calcareous gritting. Two openings, small circular one just above rim, and lower corner of large rectangular/triangular one at top of fragment. Coated with thick, smooth, yellowish slip in and out, covering sections of rectangular opening but not of circular one. Angular ‘pie-crust’ decoration runs along rim edge and along raised border, or hood, to side of rectangular opening. Impressed in slip are two vertical roller-stamped strips of decoration, consisting of two-strand interlinked circles with two double linear strands interweaving the central roundels and pellets (or vestigial rosettes) symmetrically arranged in the segments thus created. Action of making impressions has distorted circles, indicating direction of rolling. Unabraded and no sign of sooting in or out. External diam. approx. 60 cm. (24 in.).

The fabric of this Humberston piece is wholly post-Conquest: it is not as hard and tile-like as the others discussed here, partly because it seems to have been little if at all used. In thickness, size and curvature it is most like a curfew. The small hole low down on the body is a familiar feature of that vessel-type. The larger canopied opening, presumably one of a series around the body, might hitherto have been taken to identify the piece as a louvre. However, G. C. Dunning has published as curfews two vessels from Langstone Court, Monmouth, each with tiers of semi-circular or wedge-shaped openings closely comparable in design to louvers. In both examples, the openings have canopies carried down their side, as has the Humberston piece.\textsuperscript{142} The stamped decoration of the latter is almost identical to the earlier piece from Stixwould; only details of the pelleting distinguish the two. The Humberston fragment is not securely dated by its context in excavation, which appeared to be a post-Dissolution filling of the drain. The vessel-type remains a predominantly 13th-century phenomenon.\textsuperscript{143}

A further piece with stamped decoration said to be like that published from Stixwould has been reported from Bratoft, Lincs., a site of ploughed Medieval earthworks. It has not yet proved possible to trace this piece to compare it in detail with the others, following the death of the finder.\textsuperscript{144}

From G. Beresford’s recent excavations at Goltho village, Lincs., have come two more fragments of similar fabric, form and decoration. They are in a hard sandy tile fabric, decorated with vertical bands of roller-stamped lattice motif, and identified as fragments of curfews. Though the detail of the pattern is not the same as the Stix would sherds, the method of producing it, its use in vertical bands, and even the width of the


\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Victoria County History, Lincolnshire}, ii (London, 1904), 133–4. An account of the excavations is given in A. E. Kirkby and A. R. Tailby, \textit{The Abbey of St Mary and St Peter, Humberston, Lincolnshire} (privately printed at Waltham Toll Bar School, 1974), the sherd is illustrated as Fig. 34 and described as a curfew cover.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Medieval Archaeol.}, xvi (1972), 57–61.

\textsuperscript{143} The fill of the reredorter drain at Humberston was apparently a post-desertion infill, with no recorded stratification. The sherd was recovered with a large group of pottery including Cistercian ware, Netherlands majolica, Rhenish stoneware, French white clay ware and post-medieval pottery, but predominantly Humber ware, together with metalwork and painted glass of the 15th and 16th centuries. Loc. cit. in note 142.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Lincolnshire Hist. Archael.}, ii (1967), 46; but only the detailed records in Lincoln Museum record its similarity to the stamped Stixwould pieces.
strip are the same. One of the sherds has a pie-crust edging closely comparable to that at Humberston. They are dated late 13th to early 14th-century.\(^\text{145}\)

Two further points though perhaps not so directly relevant ought to be mentioned. First, the British Museum has a complete large, thick-walled, crudely-made storage vessel from Tattershall, Lincs., in its collections. So far as can be ascertained by surface inspection, this has a similar heavy sandy fabric to the earliest Stixwould piece, though much redder in colour. It has a thinner and redder all-over slip, into which are impressed twenty circular stamps around the upper body. It may therefore be thought to belong to the same context as the pottery under discussion; indeed when it was exhibited for the Royal Archaeological Institute’s Summer visit to Lincoln in 1946 Dr R. Bruce-Mitford tentatively favoured a 13th-century date for the vessel. But the stamps are far simpler and more crudely applied than the roller-stamping, and the vessel could as well be post-Medieval as Medieval.\(^\text{146}\)

Secondly, in 1975 a site at Short Ferry near Fiskerton, Lincs., investigated by A. White produced not only a large quantity of glazed 13th-century jugs, but also a surface find of a sherd in the same fabric as the earlier Stixwould piece. It too is hand-built from coils and has a thick coating slip, which is decorated with score marks and a circular rosette stamp, and to judge from thickness, curvature, and a scar where a handle has been torn away is also part of a curfew. The Short Ferry site is in a very similar situation alongside the river Witham to the find-spot at Stixwould. White suggests in informal discussion that it may be serving as a staithe and fishery for Barlings Abbey or Stainfield Priory, both less than 2 km. away to the N., and it may be that the Stixwould site bears a similar relationship to Stixwould Priory.\(^\text{147}\) There is documentary evidence for the monasteries of the Witham Valley (as one would expect) making good use of the river as a transport artery for bulky goods, and having, like Kirkstead, “booths and messuages on the river Witham”.\(^\text{148}\)

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from this body of evidence is surely that the previously published stamped sherd from Stixwould is not of middle Saxon date and is clearly not unique. The group of material hangs closely together; the vessel-type suggests a 13th to 14th-century date, and this is supported by the find-contexts and by the fabrics. One is still tempted to place the published Stixwould piece nearer the late Saxon analogies for its decoration: curfews of the 12th century are known in England. But the pattern of interlinked circles is so nearly identical on all three sherds where it occurs that they are best considered as contemporary and a dating accepted which is compatible all round.

How does such an apparently faithfully Saxon motif appear at this late date? A link which we can still trace exists in stone carving, where late Romanesque work employs free circles and other interlace designs, drawing on pre-Conquest forms. A pertinent example is a stone coffin in the cloister of Lincoln Cathedral which has along its edges a series of overlapping circles bisected by a single strand and flanked by diaper pattern.\(^\text{149}\) This sort of survival or revival is perhaps most likely in important ecclesiastical centres, in the workshops of a cathedral or monastery. It may be significant that all three pieces with linked circles have an actual or probable monastic connexion. It may

\(^{145}\) G. Beresford, op. cit. in note 139, 62 and fig. 26, Nos. 66, 67.
\(^{146}\) Archaeol. Jul., ciii (1946), 93.
\(^{147}\) I thank Andrew White for information about both the site and the specific sherd, and permission to refer to his informal opinion.
\(^{148}\) For example, the arrangements made between Bardney and Kirkstead Abbeys for transporting the former’s tithes from the lordship of Scampton via the grange of Sheepwash in Canwick; quoted by C. Illingworth, A Topographical Account of the Parish of Scampton etc. (n.p., c. 1810), 24. Public Record Office, SC6/Henry VIII/261.
\(^{149}\) G. Zarnecki, Romanesque Sculpture at Lincoln Cathedral (Lincoln, n.d.), Pl. 36a; and more generally, idem, Later English Romanesque Sculpture (London, 1953), pl. 18, 34, 35.
be equally significant that the whole group shows roller-stamping used on a specialized range of vessel-types. Nevertheless, in view of the shortlived ‘uniqueness’ of the first discovery, it would be as well to defer any claims to exclusiveness for this decorative pattern either as to milieu, or to vessel-type, or even to a distribution limited to N. Lincolnshire.

PAUL EVERSON

AN AISLED HALL AT WITHINGTON, HEREFORDSHIRE (FIG. 70)

The only examples of aisled construction hitherto recorded in Herefordshire are the Norman bishop’s palace in Hereford city and an isolated barn at Middleton on the Hill. A recent re-examination of Thinghill Grange in Withington (SO 554453) has produced a third.

Thinghill Grange consists of a hall-range with a two-story crosswing at either of its gable ends. Internally the hall range has a cross-passage demarked by a spere truss, and beyond it a two-bay hall. The upper bay of the hall is subdivided by an intermediate truss. The hall range of the house has been considerably altered; the walls have been raised and re-built in stone and consequently the wall studs, wall plates and original rafters have all disappeared. The large first-floor rooms which resulted from the raising of the walls also caused the removal of all evidence of roof trusses below arcade plate level with the exception of a single spere post. The other spere post was found on the wood-pile and has subsequently been sent for radio-carbon analysis.

The roof of the hall is of ridgeless principal rafter type. Lateral stability is ensured by a single through-purlin on each slope; no evidence remains to indicate whether or not